

## Residents gain a new park, in a roundabout fashion

MIKI PERKINS July 19, 2012



### **After much debate, city council will create park by removing lanes and closing some roads.**

URBAN dwellers often bemoan the incursion of new roads into green suburbs, the swaths of asphalt that criss-cross Melbourne and radiate summer heat.

But in North Melbourne the council will close some local roads and transform them into a permanent park, after encountering vigorous opposition from some residents and enthusiastic support from others.

This week Melbourne City Council will close portions of Errol, Harcourt and Courtney streets, which encircle a small roundabout of about 450 square metres, planted with an old Moreton Bay fig.

The new park will incorporate this roundabout and cover the closed road lanes, increasing the space to about 5000 square metres with 14 extra trees, a dry creek bed area, park furniture, while retaining the old bluestone kerbs and guttering.

Local resident Stephen Kent said residents had been lobbying the council for about five years to transform this roundabout into open space, which is next to North Melbourne Primary School.

"It's hard to create a park, and this was a rare opportunity to chop a bit off the road and turn it into something else," Mr Kent said. "It's fantastic, it's a complete no-brainer that you would remove all the bitumen - on a hot day this area is like a huge heat sink."

Local architect Peter Hogg said a large number of former industrial buildings had been converted into apartments and the influx of residents had limited parkland to use, unless they wanted to cross busy Flemington Road to get to Royal Park.

But not everyone was impressed with the proposal - the council received 12 submissions in favour of the idea and seven against, with opponents arguing it would increase traffic, erode the "heritage and historical" nature of Errol Street, and be a threat to the preservation of the wide Victorian streetscape.

After the council approved the idea some opponents took the matter to the state's planning umpire, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, which ruled in favour of creating the park.

Melbourne City councillor Brian Shanahan, who lives in North Melbourne, said it would increase public open space in an inner-city area that desperately needed it, and was the largest increase of park space in North Melbourne for many years.

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